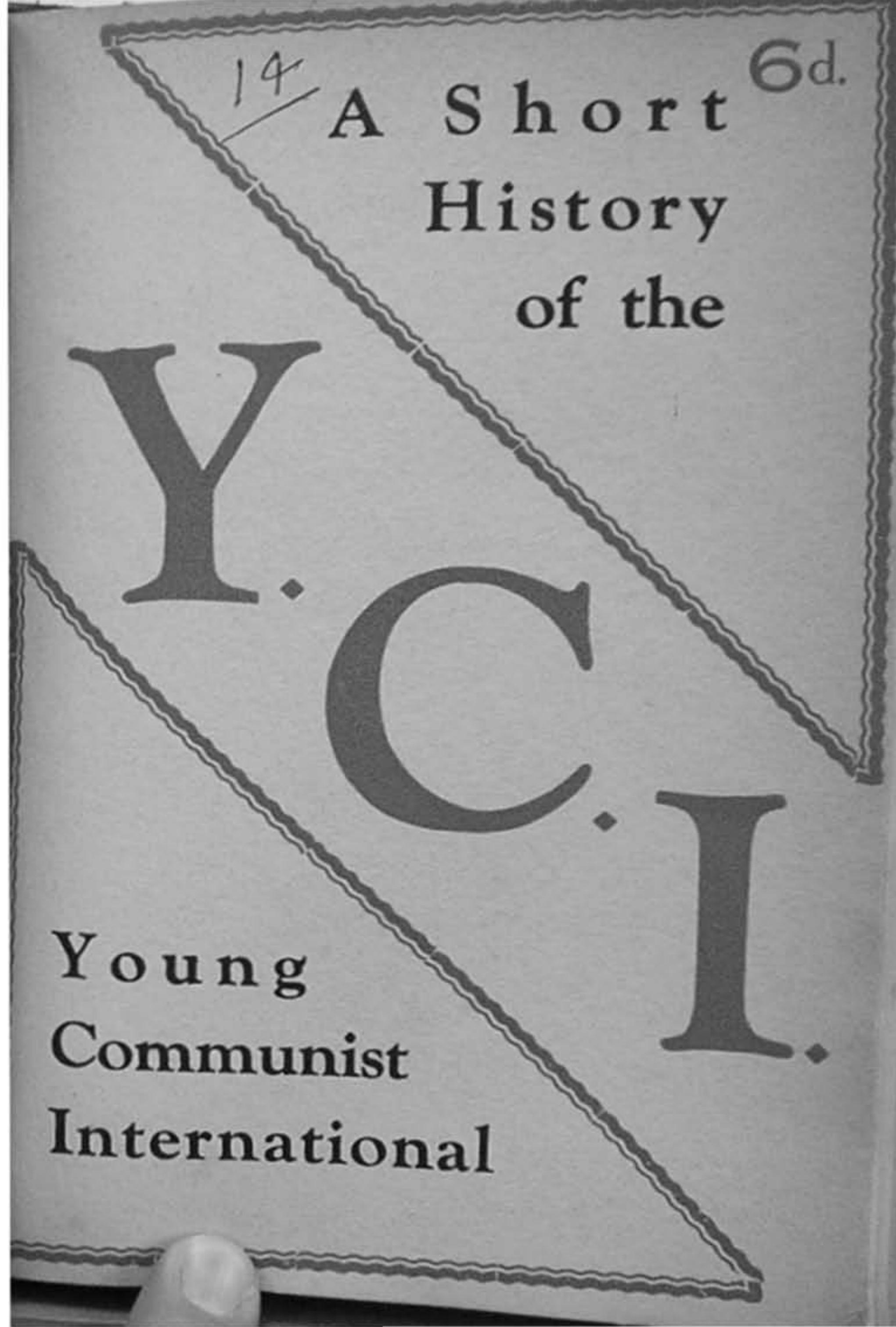


**A Short History of
the Young Communist
International**

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Dora Roberts

A SHORT HISTORY
OF THE YOUNG
COMMUNIST
INTERNATIONAL

YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE
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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE Y.C.I.

I. THE BIRTH OF THE PROLETARIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

THE birth of the proletarian youth organisations coincided with the entry of European capitalism into an imperialist phase. The immediate causes of the birth were entry of wider circles of youth into industry and sharpening of the competitive struggle which draws cheap labour power from the ranks of the young workers, the accentuation of militarism, which is particularly hard on young workers in the army, and the awakening of political consciousness among the youth which has gained its economic and political independence.

Commensurate with these causes, the following spheres of activity occupy first place in the first proletarian youth organisation : (i) struggle for the improvement of the economic position of the youth ; (ii) struggle against militarism ; (iii) Socialist self-education.

TWO TYPES OF THE MOVEMENT

The youth organisations established at the end of the last century can be divided in two groups, one of which turned its attention mainly to the anti-militaristic struggle, whereas the other concentrated on defence of the economic demands of the youth.

The following organisations belong to the first group : "Young Guards" of Belgium (established in 1886-1889), the "Socialist Youth League" of Sweden (established in 1895), the "Socialist Youth" of Switzerland (established in 1900), the "Italian Socialist Youth Federation" (established in 1901), the "Social-Democratic Youth League" of Norway (established in 1902), the "Socialist Youth" of Spain (established in 1903), the "Young Workers' League" of South Germany (established in 1904).

To the second group belonged the "Young Workers' League" of Austria (established in 1894) and the "Federation of Free Youth Leagues" of North Germany (established in 1904-5).

In some countries syndicalist and anarchist currents made their appearance among the youth. These currents led to splits in the existing youth organisations.

II. THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SOCIALIST YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

The year 1907 brought with it a new stage in the proletarian youth movement, a distinguishing feature of which was the establishment of an international federation between the existing youth organisations and the accentuation of the struggle between reformism and Bolshevism for the youth organisations.

HOSTILE ATTITUDE OF PARTIES AND TRADE UNIONS

From the beginning of the youth movement the Social-Democratic Parties and the trade unions adopted a negative attitude towards it. At that time the working youth created its organisations against the will of the official Party Executive and associated itself with the Left-wing of the parties.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

At the beginning of 1907, thanks to the initiative of the South German Young Workers' League, a preliminary International Bureau of the proletarian youth movement was formed to which Comrades Karl Liebknecht and Ludwig Frank (Germany) and Henrik de Man (Belgium) belonged. This Bureau established connection with the individual countries and prepared an International Conference.

The First International Youth Conference (Stuttgart, 1907)

The first International Conference of the Socialist Youth Organisation was held from August 24 to 26, 1907, in Stuttgart, immediately after the International Socialist Congress. Twenty delegates were present, who represented the Youth Leagues of Germany, Belgium, Austria, Sweden, Italy, Spain, Bohemia, Switzerland, Holland, Hungary and Australia.

THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME OF THE PROLETARIAN YOUTH MOVEMENT

The Conference dealt with the following questions: anti-militarism, economic struggle of the working youth and Socialist education in the youth organisations. The decisions with regard to these points constitute the first International Programme of Action of the proletarian youth movement. In these points are the germs for the subsequent tactics of the entire revolutionary youth movement.

The Conference declared that it was necessary to have separate proletarian youth organisations, it associated itself with the decisions of the preceding Stuttgart Congress of the Second International with regard to the war question, it elaborated the first programme of action of the Youth Leagues for the economic struggle (bringing forward minimum demands, establishment of youth protection commissions, inclusion of youth demands in wage agreements) and laid the foundation for the revolutionary educational programme of the working youth (education through participation in the struggle).

WEAK POINTS OF THE ORGANISATION

The Conference failed to give the International Federation of Socialist Youth Organisations a sound organisational form. It limited itself to forming an International Bureau consisting of five members resident in different countries, which subsequently proved its incapacity for practical work.

Temporary Stagnation of the Youth Movement

The First International Conference was followed by a period of temporary stagnation of the movement. The defeat of the first Russian Revolution caused great depression in the labour movement and helped the reformist currents to gain a stronger and even a leading influence. One of the consequences of these events was the destruction of the independence of the youth movement in some countries and its subordination to the reformist party leadership. The greatest sufferer in this respect was the German youth movement, whose groups were placed under the leadership of adults and were robbed of their political character. The Dutch youth movement was similarly converted into a branch of the Social-Democratic Party under

the control of adults. Also in Austria the Social-Democratic Party managed to keep the Youth League strictly non-political. Only the youth organisations of Italy, Sweden and Norway retained their political character.

INACTIVITY OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

In the International this change in the youth movement found expression in the Second International Youth Conference which was, on the whole, of a rather non-political character and at which Robert Danneberg, the follower of the reformist Austrian Social-Democracy, was elected International Secretary. An attempt was also made to subordinate the International Bureau of the youth movement to the Secretariat of the Second International (1912). However, the decision on this proposal was postponed.

At the beginning of 1914, the Youth International had 15 organisations with 170,000 members.

International Connections during the World War

Another strong impetus was given to the movement during the World War, when it once more assumed prominently *political* activity. At the beginning of the war most of the proletarian youth organisations adopted the policy of the revolutionary struggle against war.

THE YOUTH IN THE WORLD WAR

The reasons for this attitude of the youth were mainly as follows: (i) Mass inclusion of the working youth in industry in place of adult workers, (ii) absence of a labour aristocracy among the youth, (iii) absence of prolonged reformist influence prevailing in the parties.

At the outbreak of war the loose connection between the organisations was broken. The International Bureau and its secretary were inactive.

RESUMPTION OF INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

The Executives of some of the Leagues went with flying colours into the camp of the Socialist patriots (Germany, France and Austria), but a considerable majority of the Socialist Youth organisations remained loyal to their anti-militarist revolutionary past and endeavoured to resume connections over the heads of the International Bureau. At the end of 1914 the Executives of the Youth Leagues of Italy,

Scandinavia and Switzerland endeavoured to organise an international youth conference. At the beginning of 1915 the first oppositional currents made their appearance in Leagues also under social-patriotic leadership (Germany, Austria, France).

The Berne Conference

The attempts made in various quarters to organise a conference led finally in April, 1915, to a meeting of delegates of sections of the International Federation. The International Youth Conference, which took place in Berne (Switzerland) was attended by 16 delegates from ten countries (Italy, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Bulgaria, Germany — representing opposition groups — Poland and Russia — youth representatives of the Social-Democratic parties there). Altogether they had 33,000 members behind them.

REVOLUTIONARY ACTION AGAINST THE WAR

This Conference was the first meeting of representatives of Socialist organisations after the outbreak of the war. In spite of some shortcomings, which were subsequently overcome, the Conference took up a correct and revolutionary attitude to the majority of the most important questions. It declared itself emphatically against social-patriotism, placed the sections under the obligations of international solidarity for revolutionary action against the war (International Youth Day) and re-established the international organisation on a new and sounder basis. It appointed a new International Bureau and nominated Comrade W. Münzenburg its secretary.

WEAK POINTS OF THE CONFERENCE

The political weak points of the Conference were: it failed to draw from a correct analysis of the war and the attitude of Social-Democracy the necessary organisational conclusion, namely, a break with Social-Democracy and the establishment of Communist Parties and a Communist International; it included in its decisions a demand for complete disarmament and the ending of the war by the ruling class.

The Struggle of the Youth International Against the War

After the Berne Conference the International Federation

concentrated its whole strength on the organisation of international action against the war. By autumn the Youth Leagues of Rumania, Greece, United States, Canada and Spain, had associated themselves with the decisions of the Berne Conference. They were followed later by the Leagues of Finland and Russia. In Germany, France, Austria and Belgium, the opposition against the League Executive, which was hostile to the International Federation, increased.

THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY

Resting on this organisation, the International Bureau conducted a series of big protest demonstrations against the war. The International Youth Days, according to the slogans of the International Bureau, were held not only in the neutral but also in the belligerent countries. They are among the few actions of an international character during the war, of which the revolutionary labour movement can boast. In the belligerent countries the Italian League and the German opposition were at the head of these demonstrations. The activity of the International Bureau was supported by the periodical published by it, *The Youth International*, which contained articles written by some of the most prominent Bolshevik leaders of the international labour movement.

The Youth International at the End of the War

The increasing opposition of the mass of the workers to the war, the accentuation of struggles of principles in the International the victory of the Russian Revolution and the outbreak of revolutions in Central Europe, accelerated in the youth movements the final transition of the sections of the International Federation to the Communist standpoint. Finally the establishment of the Third International signalled the parting of the ways for the whole youth movement.

THE YOUTH ORGANISATIONS AFFILIATED TO THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

In the summer of 1917 the first separate young workers' movement was established in Russia, which soon identified itself unreservedly with the standpoint of the Bolshevik Party, and resulted in the establishment of the All-Russian Young Communist League in October, 1918.

In Germany the two currents within the opposition in the working youth organisation amalgamated into one united

"Federation of the Free Socialist Youth of Germany." In November, 1918, the opposition in the Young Workers' League of Austria organised the League of the "Communist Proletarian Youth of Austria." In January, 1919, the Hungarian Young Workers' League split off from the Socialist Democratic Party and established the Communist Young Workers' League of Hungary. In April, 1919, the Young Workers' League of Switzerland decided to affiliate to the Socialist League of Bulgaria. The Social-Democratic Youth League of Sweden and Norway also affiliated to the Third International in the spring of 1919. In October the Young Socialist League of Italy followed their example. The Young Communist League of Yugoslavia was established at the same time.

In view of this development of the sections, the decisions of the Berne Conference soon proved inadequate. The Youth International was lagging behind the development of its Leagues.

WEAKENING OF INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS, 1918-19.

One reason for this lagging behind—and also for the absence of an official attitude to the establishment of the Third International which had taken place in the meantime—was the interruption of international work owing to the arrest of Comrade Münzenburg and the persecution of the Swiss comrades who had been put in charge of the international work in his place. A brief revival of the activity of the International Executive of the Youth International took place in December, 1918. A rump-session of the International Bureau, held in Berlin, decided (temporarily) to transfer the secretarial work to Germany and to resume the publication of the *Youth International*. But the renewed arrests of the comrades entrusted with this work put a stop to it.

EFFORTS TO CALL AN INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

The temporary disability of the International Bureau resulted in the initiative being transferred—as in the beginning of the war—to the most active sections. While from Basle, Swiss comrades made efforts to call an international conference in Vienna, which was to put an end to the organisational chaos and the political inactivity of the Executive of the Youth International, negotiations were carried on between

Moscow (where at that time there were representatives of the Youth Leagues of Germany and Lithuania) and the then still Red Budapest for the purpose of convening an International Young Communist Conference in the latter.

THE VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

These various efforts finally led to the holding of an International Youth Conference in Vienna on August 26th, 1919. It was attended by 16 delegates, who represented seven Leagues (Russia, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Italy and two Austrian Leagues). The Vienna Conference decided to call an International Youth Congress. In this connection it was decided not to invite the social-patriotic leagues. A provisional committee was formed which took upon itself also the duties of the International Secretariat.

III. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

The Congress organised by the Provisional Committee took place under "illegal" circumstances in Berlin from November 20 to 26, 1919. It was attended by 19 delegates, representing 14 countries, which had 229,000 members in their Leagues (Russia, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Austria, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Spain, Denmark and oppositional groups from Czecho-Slovakia).

THE BERLIN PROGRAMME

The main task of the Congress consisted in extending the political development, which had taken place during the last few years in the individual Sections of the International Federation, to the International. By constituting itself as a Congress of the Young Communist International, the First Congress unreservedly adopted the platform of the International and an international programme for the new International. The most important point of this programme was its political part. In this the Young Communist International dissociated itself from the social-patriots, as well as from the Marxist centre, and set the youth organisations first and foremost the task of political struggle for Communist aims.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE YOUNG COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL

Alongside this new, clear political standpoint was a series

of organisational decisions. The loose International Federation was converted into a centralised International, at the head of which was placed a permanent body, the Executive Committee, which consisted of five members. Special youth questions were summarily dealt with in connection with the elaboration of the programme. The only exception was the question of anti-militarism, the final discussion of which was, however, transferred to the next Bureau session.

THE WEAK POINTS OF THE DECISIONS

The weak points of the decisions of the Berlin Congress lay in regard to the relation of the youth movement to the Communist International and its Parties, it drew conclusions only from the development of the past few years; it did not take into account sufficiently the development which took place in the Communist Parties after the First Congress of the Communist International and thereby impeded the clearing up of the relations between the Young Communist Leagues and the Communist Parties in the period which directly followed the Congress. The over-estimation of the rôle of the Young Communist organisations as independent political organisations side by side with the Parties of the adults, was commensurate with a certain under-estimation of the special youth tasks of the Leagues. This under-estimation was expressed in the discussions of the Congress through the opposition of the representatives of various Leagues to the emphasis given to the necessity of special educational work within the youth organisations.

The Organisational Construction of the Young Communist International

The newly-elected Executive of the International, which made its centre in Berlin, concentrated its attention on applying the Berlin decisions in organisational ways. Between December, 1919, and the spring of 1921, a considerable majority of the existing proletarian youth leagues was induced to adopt the programme of the Y.C.I., and numerous organisations were established.

OUR SECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Directly after the Berlin Congress, the following Leagues, which had not been represented there, were affiliated to the Y.C.I.: the Young Communist Leagues of Yugo-

Slavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania, Esthonia and Latvia. New organisations were established in the following countries: Great Britain (through fusion of various small proletarian youth organisations in London, Manchester and Scotland), Slovakia, Luxemburg, Fiume, Iceland, East Galicia, Mexico, South Africa, and in Eastern countries: Turkestan, Khiva, Bokhara, Persia, Asiatic Turkey, Korea and China.

CAPTURE OF CENTRIST LEAGUES

The Executive Committee of the Y.C.I. made special efforts with regard to the already existing proletarian youth Leagues in Europe and America, which were, however, still under centrist leadership. In the course of 1920, the following organisations were won for the Y.C.I. in this manner: the two national youth leagues in Czecho-Slovakia (German and Czech regions), the Young Socialist League of France and Finland, the League of the Socialist Proletarian Youth of Germany (independent) and the Socialist Youth League of the United States of North America.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE APPARATUS

Parallel with this organisational development of the Sections of the Y.C.I. was the development and consolidation of the central apparatus. Correspondence between the Executive and the International and the Sections was established in spite of enormous difficulties (closing of frontiers) on a scale hitherto unknown in the Youth International. Apart from two periodical organs, the *Youth International* and *International Youth Correspondence*, which were published monthly and every ten days respectively, a considerable number of pamphlets and leaflets were published.

THE FIRST BUREAU SESSION

The results of the first half-yearly activity of the International were summed up at the first Bureau Session, which took place in Berlin from June 9 to 13, 1920. The Bureau Session laid down the further tactics with regard to the centrist leagues, brought to a conclusion the discussion begun at the First Congress on the question of anti-militarism, gave a more precise form to the question of the relation of the Youth Leagues to the Parties (without, however, going substantially beyond the decisions made by the First Congress) and completed the organisational structure of the International (consolidation of the sub-secretariats in Basle, Vienna,

Stockholm and Moscow, improvement of publishing activity and consolidation of the organisational connection between the E.C. and the Sections).

THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE IN MOSCOW

The first Bureau Session was continued at an international conference of youth representatives which took place in July-August, 1920, during the Session of the Second Congress of the Comintern in Moscow. This Conference dealt with the attitude of the Y.C.I. to the decisions of the Second Congress of the Comintern and the further clearing up of the relation between the youth organisations and the Parties. On the strength of the proposals at this Conference the E.C.C.I. passed a resolution on relations between the Y.C.L. and the Party.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES IN EAST AND WEST EUROPE

The popularisation of the ideas of the Y.C.I. among proletarian youth organisations was again discussed at a series of international conferences which took place in 1920 and 1921. (Three conferences for the youth organisations of South-East Europe which took place in Vienna on May 16th-17th, 1920, December 15, 1920, and February 26, 1921, and two conferences for the West-European Leagues: May 20, 1920, in Milan, and November 28-29, 1920, in Luxemburg.

The Beginning of the Re-organisation of the Y.C.I. with a view to the New Youth Tasks

A discussion started in the autumn of 1920 in the Y.C.I. on the extension of the activity of the Young Communist Leagues in the sphere of special youth questions.

INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS

Questions connected with the conversion of the Young Communist Leagues into mass organisations with the relation of the Y.C.L. to the C.P. and the tasks and methods of the economic struggle were fully discussed in the central organ, the *Youth International*, and in a number of League organs.

THE PROPOSALS OF THE RUSSIAN YOUNG COMMUNIST LEAGUE

With regard to the relation of the Y.C.L. to the Party, a

serious divergence of opinion arose between the Russian Young Communist League and the E.C., Y.C.I. The Russian Young Communist League decided on November 1st, 1920, to place before the Y.C.I. a fundamental new regulation of this relation, which amounted to the political subordination of the Young Communist Leagues to the leadership of the Parties of their respective countries accompanied by the retention of organisational independence. The Russian Youth organisation connected this question also with the question of the place where the Second Congress was to be held and of the centre of the E.C., Y.C.I., proposing in both cases Moscow instead of Berlin. In order to settle this divergence of opinion, the E.C., Y.C.I. sent in February, 1921 a special delegation to Moscow, on whose return, however, the Executive Committee still insisted on calling the Second Congress in Germany, in April, 1921.

IV. TRANSITION OF THE Y.C.I. TO THE SPECIAL YOUTH QUESTIONS

THE JENA YOUTH CONGRESS

The Second Congress of the Y.C.I. was to take place in Berlin, in April, 1921. Its agenda contained first and foremost the questions which had been the subject of discussion during the last months in the Y.C.I. : press, economic struggle, educational work and anti-militarism. The Congress was opened on April 6th in Jena, after the proposal of the representatives of the Young Communist Leagues of Russia, Latvia, Lithuania and Bulgaria of the Conference constituting itself as international conference and transferring the Second Congress to Moscow, had been rejected by a majority decision.

About 100 delegates were present, who represented all European and American Leagues except those of Spain and Portugal. The Russian Young Communist League was represented only by its permanent representative in the Executive Committee; there were no delegates from the Eastern Leagues.

THE POLITICAL PLATFORM OF THE JENA CONGRESS

The Congress did not get any further than the first item of the agenda : the political situation throughout the world.

After exhaustive discussions which were transferred on April 10th to Berlin for reasons of illegality, the Congress passed a resolution which adopted the standpoint of the "theory of revolutionary offensive" which was represented at that time by a minority in the Communist International. This resolution gave expression to the erroneous fundamental political standpoint taken up by the Sections and the Executive of the Y.C.I. after the First Congress.

The Congress broke up on April 11th after it had become known to it that the E.C.C.I. supported the proposal of the Young Communist League of Russia to postpone the Congress and to combine it with the Third Congress of the Comintern. The E.C.C.I. had arrived at this decision because it attached considerable political importance to the question of the meeting place of the Congress.

THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE Y.C.I. IN MOSCOW

The continuation of the Second Congress—namely, the real Second Congress took place in Moscow from June 9 to 23. The actual Congress was preceded by numerous partial negotiations, during which the problems which had cropped up in the course of the past few months were thoroughly discussed. All these negotiations, as well as the Session of the Second Congress itself, were held under the political influence of the work of the Third Congress of the Comintern, in which the youth delegates actively participated. During these discussions the fallacies of the fundamental political standpoint were recognised, a considerable number of the decisions of the Third Congress being devoted to refuting the offensive theory and to bringing forward the slogan : "Nearer to the Masses, Capture of the Majority of the Proletariat."

THE YOUTH QUESTION AT THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE C.I.

The Third Congress of the Comintern also paid special attention to youth questions. It adopted the standpoint of the Russian Young Communist League with regard to the relation of the Y.C.L. to the Party, declared essential the subordination of the Young Communist League to the political leadership of the Sections of the Comintern and gave an outline of the extension of the activity of the Young Communist Leagues in the sphere of special youth questions, on the strength of such subordination.

The Second Congress of the Y.C.I. was attended by 120 delegates, who represented 36 Y.C.I. Sections with a total membership of 600,000. There were in addition 15 delegates from six Leagues not affiliated to the Y.C.I.

The Congress associated itself unreservedly with the platform and decisions of the Third Congress of the Comintern and turned its attention to a detailed elaboration of the enlarged youth tasks already laid down in the resolution of the Third Congress. Questions connected with the relation of the Y.C.L. to the Party, the economic struggle and anti-militarism were thoroughly discussed, the remaining questions: Communist educational work, agitational and organisational work among colonial peoples, the agrarian question, the Communist children's movement and organisational questions were discussed and solved only in a preliminary general way.

Of special importance was the discussion on economic questions. In this discussion, the demand brought forward by the Austrian League in the preceding press discussion to establish, under certain conditions, for economic struggles special youth organisations which were to be a link between the Y.C.L. and the mass of young workers, was rejected. The organisation and conduct of the struggle for the economic and interests of the working youth was designated as one of the most important spheres of Y.C.L. activity.

V. THE Y.C.I. DURING THE CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE

The period of the development of the labour movement which followed the Second Congress showed how necessary the reorganisation of the Y.C.I. had been. The activity of the newly elected and reinforced Executive Committee which henceforth carried on its work from Moscow, was now devoted to giving a lead to the current work of the Leagues on the basis of the decisions made by the Second Congress.

THE EBB OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAVE

Taking advantage of the ebb of the revolutionary wave, the bourgeoisie in Europe and America assumed the offensive against the working class. Reduction of wages and lengthening of working hours were characteristic of this period. Owing to the treacherous attitude of the Social-Democrats and the reformist trade unions, the resistance of the working-class

was broken nearly everywhere. The result of these reverses was diminution of political interest among workers whose chief concern was defence of their petty material demands.

THE CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE AND THE WORKING YOUTH

The working youth had also to bear the brunt of the capitalist offensive. In its ranks, too, a strong diminution of political interest was noticeable, accompanied by increased reformist influence. The transition of the youth Leagues from popularisation of general political ideas to defence of the immediate vital interests of the working youth was, under such circumstances, an inevitable necessity.

THE TACTICS OF THE PROLETARIAN UNITED FRONT

The E.C.C.I. took this development into account by deciding (in December, 1921) to make the tactic of the proletarian united front the basis of the activity of the Comintern in the immediate future. The Young Communist International also adopted this tactic by popularising the struggle for the establishment of the revolutionary united front as its main task. For the proletarian youth movement the establishment of the revolutionary united front took a twofold form: firstly, inclusion of the working youth in the general front of the struggling proletariat (in order to frustrate the efforts of the bourgeoisie, which had reformist support, to play off the working youth as strike-breakers against adult workers), secondly, co-ordination of the forces of the proletarian youth movement for the enforcement of the elementary economic demands of the working youth.

THE UNITED FRONT AND THE YOUTH

Already in December, 1921, the E.C., Y.C.I. addressed a memorandum to the Comintern and the Red International of Labour Unions in which the economic demands of the working youth in the struggle against the capitalist offensive were laid down. This memorandum was adopted by the two organisations and the youth demands were added to the programme of the revolutionary organisation of the adult workers.

THE STRUGGLE FOR THE YOUNG WORKERS' WORLD CONGRESS

Furthermore, the Y.C.I. participated in the steps taken by the Comintern for the organisation of an international con-

ference of the Three Internationals. After these negotiations, the E.C., Y.C.I. tried to bring about a similar conference for the three Youth Internationals. A letter, dated June 26, addressed to the two Internationals, contained, apart from the invitation to hold a Young Workers' World Congress, the minimum programme of the joint struggle against the capitalist offensive. These efforts failed owing to the opposition of the social-patriotic Youth International, which induced the so-called "Vienna" Youth International (which maintained the standpoint of the Marxist centre) to refuse to co-operate with the Y.C.I. and to establish, instead of it, closer connection between the two Social-Democratic Youth Internationals, which subsequently took place under social-patriotic leadership.

ORGANISATIONAL EXTENSION

The Executive Committee worked simultaneously for the further organisational development of the International. In this connection, special attention was paid to the Anglo-Saxon countries, America and the colonial countries. This was the period of the final establishment of the Young Communist Leagues of Great Britain and the U.S.A. New Sections were formed in the three South American States: Argentine, Uruguay and Bolivia. The Young Communist Leagues of China and Korea finally adopted the standpoint of the Y.C.I., and new organisations were established in Japan, North Africa and Australia. The first co-ordination of the experiences on the basis of the decisions of the Second Congress took place at the third Bureau Session of the Y.C.I., which was held in Moscow from March 18 to 25, 1922. It was devoted first and foremost to practical detailed discussion of the decisions of the Second Congress. The measures of the E.C. with regard to the application of the united front tactics in the youth movement were endorsed, and further steps in this direction (formulating conditions of Y.C.L. participations in the international conferences of the Comintern and preparation of the Young Workers' World Congress) were taken.

With regard to industrial-trade-union work, the bureau session demanded greater activity and regulated the form of Y.C.L. work in trade unions. In connection with the united front, the Bureau Session paid special attention to questions connected with the general attitude to opponent bourgeois and Social-Democratic youth organisations.

Transition to Mass Work

DIFFICULTIES AND OPPOSITION

Transition to the new course decided upon by the Second Congress met with different forms of opposition in the various countries. The ebb of the revolutionary wave was accompanied by serious opportunist crises in some of the Parties, which also found an echo in the Y.C.I. Some Leagues, or strong groups within them, offered opposition to the carrying through of the decisions of the Second Congress (Italy, Germany, Austria), or gave them a wrong, non-political interpretation (Great Britain, America). Contrary to the first period of the Y.C.I., all these deviations were, however, immediately noticed by the E.C., which intervened in a guiding capacity in all these discussions. Apart from these deviations, the Leagues proceeded to carry out the decisions of the Second Congress, namely, to capture the masses by concentrating their attention on the special youth questions.

BEGINNING OF THE INDUSTRIAL STRUGGLE

In Germany the League started a comprehensive campaign against the introduction of the 54-hour working week for the working youth, which reached its climax in a big demonstration on March 26th, 1922. In Austria the League fought for the improvement of the position of pupils of technical schools and for the strict application of the legislation for apprentices. It succeeded in inducing the centrist League to increase its activity in the interest of the economic demands of the working youth. In these struggles the opposition developed within the centrist League, from whose ranks new forces subsequently came over to the Young Communist League. The Swedish League initiated a campaign for the economic protection of the working youth, which was commenced by an open letter to non-Communist organisations and trade unions. A similar campaign was organised by the League in Denmark.

STRENGTHENING ANTI-MILITARIST ACTIVITY

The anti-militarist activity was also given an impetus. In the struggle against Fascism the Young Communist League militarised its organisations and fought the Fascist gangs in a series of battles with varying success. The French League gave an impetus to its anti-militarist activity by beginning to organise illegal nuclei in the standing army. In Czechoslovakia, the anti-militarist activity, which was formerly of

a pacifist character, was given a Communist character on the occasion of the yearly calling up of recruits. In this connection a beginning was made with Communist activity in the barracks.

THE BEGINNING OF EDUCATIONAL WORK

With the active co-operation of the E.C. the most important Leagues took up systematic educational work in their ranks. For the first time the principle of "political elementary education" for all members of the organisation was introduced, many short educational courses were held during the summer months, and an international course for functionaries was also organised. At the same time the League press was co-ordinated and developed.

THE COMMUNIST CHILDREN'S LEAGUE

Considerable progress was made in the Communist children's movement. On the strength of the decisions of the Second Congress, theoretical questions of the children's movement were cleared up, the Y.C.I. attacking at the same time, the non-political "humanitarian" education of children in the old Socialist children's movement and the pseudo-revolutionary methods of the radical bourgeois education (self-development of the child). The children's-group movement developed rapidly in Germany, Switzerland, Czecho-Slovakia, and in the Scandinavian countries. The first big national children's conference followed up by the Second Conference of leaders of children's groups was held in Germany. This conference was attended by many representatives of the foreign children's group movement. The impetus given to children's-group work caused Social-Democracy to co-ordinate their own children's groups internationally.

ORGANISATIONAL STAGNATION

In spite of this change in the activity of the Youth Leagues, organisational stagnation set in in the Youth International as a whole. The re-organisation of the Leagues was started a little too late, owing to the postponement of the Second Congress, and, as a result of the diminution of political interest among the working youth, it was impossible to prevent the loss of part of the membership of the old organisations.

ORGANISATIONAL DEFECTS

Among the causes of the stagnation are certainly also

the defects of the decisions of the Second Congress with regard to organisation. The few, and far from clear, points contained in the resolution of the Second Congress on the organisation of nuclei in the factory were disregarded by the Leagues. The organisation remained on the old obsolete basis of territorial grouping of the members, which was in keeping with the character of the Youth Leagues as political propaganda societies. The Executive Committee turned its attention to this question in the spring of 1922 by issuing a circular on the reorganisation of the Leagues." In this circular the principle of nucleus organisation was fully developed.

VI. THE INTENSIFICATION OF THE NEW COURSE

THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE Y.C.I.

To correct the defects of the decisions of the Second Congress was one of the tasks of the Third Congress. It was in Session in Moscow from December 4 to 12, 1922. It was attended by 91 delegates, representing 38 organisations, with a total membership of 750,000. The main point of consideration and discussion was the examination of the success obtained in the application of the decisions of the Second Congress.

It was recorded that the reorganisation of the Leagues for the new course was carried through satisfactorily in general, but that transition to a mass organisation had not yet taken place.

THE POLITICISATION OF LEAGUE WORK

The decline of political activity noticed in a number of Leagues in connection with the development of their activity with regard to special youth questions, was condemned. Subordination of the Leagues to the political leadership of the Parties does not mean relinquishing their political activity. The whole work (industrial-trade-union struggle, educational work, anti-militarist propaganda) must be given a political character.

REORGANISATION ON THE BASIS OF FACTORY NUCLEI

The Congress declared that adherence to the old territorial forms of organisation was the main reason for the failure

to develop mass organisations. Owing to the inadequate establishment of the Leagues in the factories their social composition was also unsatisfactory. Young workers in heavy industry did not constitute the nucleus of the Leagues, but mostly remained outside the movement. By a detailed establishment of factory groups and reorganisation of the Leagues on this basis, the Third Congress supplemented the decisions of the Second.

THE STRUGGLE FOR ECONOMIC PARTIAL DEMANDS :

THE MOSCOW ECONOMIC PROGRAMME

The resumption of the economic struggle by a number of Leagues under conditions of continuous capitalist offensive brought a series of experiences and raised new problems. The Congress drew the attention of the Leagues to the necessity of resisting the lowering of the standard of living of the working youth and of defending the young workers on all vital questions affecting them. This struggle must be carried on as a struggle for partial demands which pursue a revolutionary aim. For this struggle, the Congress drew up the first revolutionary programme of economic demands of the working youth based on the idea of the Socialist reorganisation of youth labour already begun in Russia. It gave, moreover, the first practical directions for the work of Young Communists in trade unions.

STRUGGLE AGAINST PACIFISM, DISINTEGRATION OF THE BOURGEOIS ARMY

The growth of the imperialist differences in Europe demanded more attention to the anti-militarist struggle. The Congress dealt, among other things, with the attitude of Communists to imperialist war. The deliberations were based on the instructions given by Lenin to the delegation to the Peace Congress at the Hague. The resolution is directed against bourgeois pacifism, the idea of "arbitration courts," general disarmament and against the deceitful talk of a "general strike" in the event of mobilisation without previous long agitation and organisational work. He set against these slogans as slogans of the Y.C.I.: disarmament of the bourgeoisie, disintegration of the bourgeois army and its conquest for the proletariat, transformation of imperialist war into civil war. In the interest of a practical carrying through of these tasks, the Congress placed the Y.C.L.s under the obligation of forming illegal revolutionary groups in the bourgeois army.

DRAFT OF THE NEW PROGRAMME

The experience hitherto gained in all the spheres of Y.C.L. activity were co-ordinated in the new draft programme of the Y.C.I. which was submitted to the Leagues for discussion. In this draft programme the rôle, tasks and methods of work of the Y.C.I. were dealt with in a new form, far ahead of the Berlin decisions.

Reorganisation of the Leagues and New Political Struggles

ANOTHER REVOLUTIONARY CRISIS

The period following the Third Congress was characterised by another outbreak of revolution in Central Europe (revolutionary crises in Germany, Bulgaria and Poland) and another advance of Fascism and reaction (Italy, Spain, Germany, the Balkans, the Border States).

BIG POLITICAL STRUGGLES

In the big political struggles which resulted from this situation and which ended in defeats of the Communist movement and led to serious political crises in the C.P., the Y.C.L.s regained to a great extent their political activity. Not only did they participate in the political struggles, they also took an active part in the inner-Party discussions in which they acted as loyal supporters of the standpoint of the Y.C.I.. Neither did special youth work stand still, considerable progress was made in the anti-militarist struggle. For the first time since the war, the Y.C.I. carried through a big special campaign against the war danger.

ANOTHER REVIVAL

Thanks to this increased activity of the Leagues, the Y.C.I. went through a period of rapid revival. It was in Great Britain, North America and China that the Leagues grew very strong. The Scandinavian Leagues went through a whole revolution from the old type of Young Socialist Parties to Young Communist Leagues. The press of the Leagues also underwent a thorough change; this was the time when the type of mass youth periodicals was created.

THE FOURTH BUREAU SESSION

The Fourth International Session, which took place in Moscow from July 13th to 20th, 1923, set the task of carrying through in a practical way, the decisions of the Second and Third Congresses.

A series of amendments to the draft programme were adopted.

PRACTICAL ANTI-MILITARISM

The resolution on anti-militarism draws attention to the increased war danger (Germany, France) and the threatening attack on Soviet Russia, gives a practical programme for securing the sympathy of soldiers by taking up their direct national and juridical interests and gives further instructions for the establishment of groups in the army.

PRACTICAL REORGANISATION

With regard to reorganisation it was recorded that the period of discussing reorganisation on principle is over and that practical transition to the factory group basis is beginning, which is connected with the special task of gingering up the Parties on this question. Factory group organisation was closely connected with immediate tasks in the sphere of economic struggle and educational work.

NEW SPHERES OF ACTIVITY

For the first time the question of work among agricultural labourers and the peasant youth and the question of struggle against religion and capture of the workers' sport movement for Communism were thoroughly discussed.

A flagrant defect of the Bureau Session was inadequate attention to the revolutionary crisis which was maturing in Central Europe. The too broad treatment of the co-ordinating of special youth questions led to a certain neglect of the political perspective.

RENEWED POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE Y.C.L.

As a result of the sharp accentuation of class differences in Europe (revolutionary crises in Germany, Poland and Bulgaria, growing political opposition in Italy, the Labour Government in Great Britain) and of the political movements arising therefrom, the work of the most important Y.C.L.s assumes again a strong political character. Anti-militarist work was given a special impetus. For the first time in the history of the Y.C.I., disintegrating work on an international scale was carried through in a practical manner with some success in the bourgeois army (during the occupation of the Ruhr district by the French troops).

BEGINNING OF REORGANISATION ON A FACTORY GROUP BASIS

Simultaneously, a beginning was made in the most important Leagues with reorganisation on a factory group basis. The reorganisation was given special significance through the growth of the reaction which drove new Leagues, temporarily or entirely, into illegality. The growth of the reaction extended to the Leagues of Bulgaria, Germany, France, Poland, Japan, Estonia, Norway, Finland, Lithuania and Latvia.

VII. ON THE ROAD TO BOLSHEVISATION

THE FOURTH CONGRESS OF THE Y.C.I.

The Fourth Congress took place in Moscow from July 13th to 25th, 1924. The Y.C.I. had at that time one million members spread over 60 Leagues.

BOLSHEVISATION

The main task of the Congress, whose work was done in commissions, was utilisation of the political development of 1923 and co-ordination of the new experiences in the central slogan : "Bolshevisation of the Y.C.I."

THE STUDY OF LENINISM

The Congress declared that one of the chief conditions for the Bolshevikisation of the Y.C.L.s was serious study of the Leninist ideas and permeation of the entire League work by them. The whole struggle against Right and Left deviations in the Communist movement (Trotskyism, opportunist currents in Germany, France, Bulgaria, Poland, etc.) taken up correctly and successfully by the Leagues must be politically intensified and pursued. Political clarity is essential for correct definition and carrying through the special youth tasks.

UNIFORM EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Leninist educational work cannot be carried on successfully unless a uniform gradual educational system is adopted.

CONTINUATION OF REORGANISATION

Reorganisation on the factory group basis was described as an organisational condition of reorganisation. Reorganisation on such a basis must make the factories into citadels of Communism.

NEW METHODS IN THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLE

With regard to the economic struggle, which assumed new significance after the setbacks, new directions were issued concerning co-operation with the revolutionary trade unions and work in reformist trade unions. For practical work, new forms of winning the masses—factory meetings, industrial campaigns, young workers' conferences, factory newspapers, etc., were elaborated.

THE AGRARIAN AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS AS PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

The question of work among peasants and in colonial countries, which was given new significance owing to the defeat in Poland and Bulgaria and the beginning of a revolutionary movement in the colonies, was dealt with from the viewpoint of the adoption of new methods of agitation and organisation.

From the Fourth to the Fifth World Congress

ENLARGED PLENUM OF THE E.C., Y.C.I.

For the first time after the Fourth Congress an enlarged Plenum of the E.C., Y.C.I. was held, on April 13th, 1925. At this Plenum a number of questions were discussed which had arisen in the application of resolutions of the Fourth Congress, particularly of the resolution on Bolshevisation. Theses on the Bolshevisation of the Y.C.I. were adopted in which the main lines and concrete tasks of the Leagues in all spheres of activity for developing them in Bolshevik mass organisations were formulated. These theses form the basic documents of the Y.C.I.

The resolution of the Fourth Congress on the necessity of an intensified study of Leninism was also put in concrete form by the Plenum in a special resolution on Leninist education.

HASTENING OF THE REORGANISATION AND STRENGTHENING OF TRADE UNION WORK

Furthermore, the Plenum discussed a number of questions in connection of the final reorganisation of the Y.C.I. on a factory group basis and brought up the following four tasks in the field of trade union and industrial activity:

- (i) Adherence of all Y.C.L. members to trade unions;
- (ii) establishment and extension of Y.C.L. fractions in the trade

unions;

- (iii) carrying out of the campaign in the international trade union body;
- (iv) transition of the Y.C.L.s from general propaganda to concrete work in the factories.

The Plenum also adopted a resolution in favour of the international unity of the workers' sport movement.

BERLIN CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN LEAGUES

In connection with the intervention of European imperialism in China, Syria and Morocco, the Y.C.I. organised a Conference of the European Young Communist Leagues, which was held in Berlin on July 21st and 22nd. In addition to a number of members of the E.C., Y.C.I. there were present representatives of the Y.C.L.s of Germany, France, England, U.S.S.R., Czechoslovakia, Italy, Austria, Holland, Poland, Switzerland and the Scandinavian and Balkan Federations.

ACTIVITY IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR DANGER

The Conference discussed the tasks of the Y.C.I. in relation to the war danger, the revolutionary events in China, the Moroccan war and the preparations of the imperialists for an attack upon the U.S.S.R. and took this occasion to address a manifesto to the working youth in which they were called upon to join the struggle against war and to take part in an anti-war week preceding the International Youth Day. The general task of the struggle against intervention and the war danger was put in concrete form for each country, and for the Y.C.L. of France in particular, the task was worked out in connection with the Moroccan war. A special letter was addressed to the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee calling for a united front in the struggle against the war danger.

REVOLUTIONARY EVENTS IN CHINA

The Berlin Conference pointed out with satisfaction the outstanding rôle played by the Chinese revolutionary youth headed by the Y.C.L. in the development of revolutionary events in Shanghai, Canton, Hongkong and other centres of struggle. The struggle of the working-peasants and the student youth of China is a splendid page in the history of the liberation struggle of the Chinese people. It is one of the main forces and decisive factors which make the victory of oppressed China over imperialism certain.

UNITED FRONT TACTICS : TRADE UNION WEEK

Furthermore the conference adopted a resolution on the application of the united front tactics, criticised the deviations which had come to light and established concrete instructions for the application of the united front in the different countries. It further resolved to carry out an international trade union week for the recruiting of young workers for the trade unions and for the struggle to establish a united front.

United Front Proposal to the Y.S.I.

OPEN LETTER TO THE Y.S.I.

The E.C., Y.C.I. addressed an open letter to the Bureau of the Young Socialist International which was to meet on August 21st in Marseilles. This letter contained the proposal for a united front against the preparations for attack on the U.S.S.R., against the White terror, for the industrial demands of the working youth and for international trade union unity.

ORGANISATION OF DELEGATIONS OF YOUNG WORKERS

At the same time the E.C., Y.C.I. proposed to the Y.S.I. to organise a joint campaign for the sending of delegations of young workers to the U.S.S.R. so that the young workers of Europe could become familiar with the situation of the working youth in the Soviet Union.

THE Y.S.I. REJECTS THE UNITED FRONT PROPOSAL

After a long silence the Y.S.I. replied to the open letter of the E.C., Y.C.I. In this reply the Y.S.I. rejected the proposal for a joint struggle against the war danger on the grounds that it had already expressed its stand with regard to the war danger in the resolutions of its first congress. The proposal for jointly sending workers' delegations was adopted, on condition, however, that the delegations be chosen in full agreement with the central bodies of the countries concerned and that the Y.S.I. be permitted to send a special delegation to the U.S.S.R. of its own choosing, with its own interpreter and that this delegation be given the opportunity of speaking with the young Mensheviks in the prisons of the Soviet Union.

THE FIRST YOUNG WORKERS' DELEGATION IN THE U.S.S.R.

While the Y.S.I. was still preparing its answer, several delegations of young workers from Western Europe (Austria, Germany, Belgium, Czechoslovakia and France), including many young Socialists (without the permission of their central bodies) reached the U.S.S.R. and took part in the anniversary celebration of the October Revolution (1925). Most of the young Socialists were expelled from their Leagues upon their return.

UNMASKING OF THE Y.S.I. MANOEUVRE

In its letter in answer to the reply of the Y.S.I., the E.C., Y.C.I. emphasises that the very fact of this reply is a sign of the radicalisation of the working masses which is forcing the Y.S.I. to manœuvre. The Y.C.I. is ready now, as it was before, to form joint commissions with the Socialist youth organisations for the sending of delegations of the working youth to the U.S.S.R., but it insists first of all that the delegates be factory workers and elected by the youth in the factories and secondly, it rejects the proposal to send a special Y.S.I. delegation, since objective judgment of Soviet conditions could not be expected of it.

CARRYING OUT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION WEEK

The first international trade union week took place from November 14th to 30th, 1925. This was at a time when there was great trade union activity in the different countries. Leagues like the Scandinavian and Swiss Leagues, which had neglected trade union work to a great extent, made satisfactory starts. Other Leagues intensified their League activity (Czechoslovakia); the main defect was shown to be inadequate support by the Party and the Sections of the Profintern as well as the inability to utilise sufficiently international events (meeting of the Anglo-Russian Committee, session of the Amsterdam International).

OVERCOMING STAGNATION : MARCH PLENUM, 1926

In its analysis of the situation of the youth movement the Plenum of the E.C., Y.C.I., declared that the low stage of development and the standstill which was to be observed in a number of Leagues after the ebbing of the revolutionary

tide in the autumn of 1923 had already been overcome. Great work had been accomplished in drawing the youth into the struggle for the united front; for example, the Y.C.L. of Italy, in spite of its position of illegality, had organised conferences in 1924 and 1925 which were attended by a total of 2,000 delegates representing more than 50,000 young workers. At this time the Y.C.L. of France held 33 conferences with 2,300 delegates from 410 factories, in addition to conducting a widespread anti-militarist campaign and holding a general national congress of the working and peasant youth. The Y.C.L. of Germany conducted 17 conferences with the total attendance of 1,750 representing more than 50,000 young workers, in addition to a large protest campaign against the compensation for the confiscation of the property of the ex-Ruling Houses, etc.

NEW QUESTIONS AT THE PLENUM

At the same time, however, a great fluctuation in the membership came to light and the lack of live forms of activity in the Leagues as well as weakness in the work of the trade union youth sections. In this connection the Plenum instructed the Leagues to adopt new methods of work and develop internal democracy. Furthermore, the Plenums resolved that committees of action of the youth as well as united front committees should be established, to be elected at conferences of the working youth. The co-ordination of legal with illegal work in the countries of white terror was especially emphasised.

REORGANISATION

As for reorganisation, the Plenum issued the slogan of the resumption, extension and completion of reorganisation with, however, the erroneous specification of a set date. Certain lessons were also learned from past experience: (a) the reorganisation should not be carried out until the factory groups were already functioning; (b) the reorganisation should be carried out in such a way that no loss of membership would result; (c) it was recognised that it was a mistake to retain street groups as secondary organisational units.

THE GENERAL STRIKE IN GREAT BRITAIN

In connection with the General Strike and the miners' lock-out in Great Britain, the Y.C.I. organised everywhere sympathetic mass demonstrations for the British miners, collections of funds, etc. The Y.C.L. of Great Britain par-

ticipated most actively in the strike movement, sending its representatives to the committees of action and developing widespread activity among the young miners. Also the Y.C.L. of Germany, Belgium, France, Czechoslovakia and the United States strengthened their activity among the young miners. A telegram from the E.C., Y.C.I., to the V.S.I. proposing joint action in support of the British proletariat was rejected by the V.S.I.

STRUGGLE AGAINST THE LEFT DEVIATIONS

There was an Enlarged Plenum of the E.C., Y.C.I. which brought to light the most unanimous feeling throughout the Communist youth movement in the struggle against the "Left" deviation and the opposition. The Plenum declared that the political line and stand of the Executive members, Vuyovitch and Mikhaletz, who had sided with the opposition, had no support in the Y.C.I. sections and decided to remove them from the E.C.

ERRORS IN THE APPLICATION OF UNITED FRONT TACTICS

The results of the united front tactics with regard to the V.S.I. were taken up. In general it was considered correct. At the same time, however, the Plenum pointed out a number of individual mistakes made in the application of this tactic by the Leagues of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria and other countries. These mistakes were mostly of a Right nature due to the inexperience of the leading cadres, and were not difficult to overcome.

EFFECTS OF CAPITALIST RATIONALISATION

For the first time the effects of capitalist rationalisation on the youth were discussed by this Enlarged Plenum. The Y.C.I. upheld the Comintern on this question and rejected the statements of certain comrades who attempted to show that the rôle of the working youth in industry was falling off as a result of rationalisation.

UTILISATION OF THE JUNGSTURM EXPERIENCE

The question of the legal activity of the Leagues which are driven into illegal work was taken up in the greatest detail. The Plenum resolved to utilise the experience of the German Jungsturm for other Leagues.

The Plenum also worked out the concrete tasks of the Chinese, Korean and Japanese Y.C.L.'s and adopted resolu-

tions on the system of political educational work, children's work, and work in opponent organisations (religious organisations, reformist sport organisations, and other organisations of the youth).

YOUTH COMMISSION IN THE R.I.L.U.

Beginning with 1927 a youth commission for the R.I.L.U. was established jointly by the Y.C.I. and the R.I.L.U. Three representatives of the Y.C.I. and three from the R.I.L.U. were delegated to this commission. This youth commission took upon itself the task of carrying on the youth work of the R.I.L.U. which has so far been very much neglected.

WEEK OF STRUGGLE AGAINST THE WAR DANGER

In connection with the crisis in the relations between Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. as well as the increased preparation for an imperialist attack on the U.S.S.R., the Y.C.I. carried out the first week of struggle against the war danger and intervention in China and for immediate withdrawal of all troops and warships from China and for the Chinese and Russian revolutions.

At a result of the weak international education in a number of Leagues, this campaign was successfully carried out only by the French, British and Italian Leagues.

BREAKING OFF OF ANGLO-RUSSIAN RELATIONS

The provocative attitude of the British Government and the breaking off of relations with the U.S.S.R. was answered by the Y.C.I. of Great Britain and the L.Y.C.L.S.U. with a joint appeal to the working youth calling upon them to struggle against the threatened attack on the Soviet Union.

JULY 15TH, 1927

The Y.C.I. of Austria took a most active part in the uprising of the Vienna proletariat issuing the slogans: disarming and dissolution of all Fascist organisations and the police, struggle for the workers' and peasants' government, and declaration of the General Strike. At the very first information on the events in Vienna, the Y.C.I. in all countries called upon the working youth to support the heroic struggles of the Vienna workers.

The Twentieth Anniversary of the Stuttgart Congress (August 26-28, 1927)

THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE STUTTGART CONGRESS

This marked the beginning of a great propaganda campaign showing the significance of this congress, and a great international demonstration was held in Stuttgart attended by delegations from all European sections of the Y.C.I. From August 26th to September 7th (International Youth Day) a great propaganda campaign was carried on for the purpose of showing the working youth that the Y.C.I. was the only representative of and successor to the International Alliance of Socialist Youth Organisations which was founded at the Stuttgart Congress in 1907.

CONGRESS OF THE YOUNG FRIENDS OF THE SOVIET UNION (NOVEMBER, 1927)

The Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution brought a stream of youth delegations to the Soviet Union, who organised a Congress of Young Friends of the Soviet Union in Moscow. The congress drew up a statement in which it declared that the cause of the working and peasant youth of the Soviet Union was the cause of the proletariat of the entire world, and pledged itself to devote all its forces to the interests of the Soviet Union.

The Congress was attended by more than 80 representatives of 20 different countries: in addition to England, Germany, Austria, France, Czecho-Slovakia, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and Belgium, there were representatives of countries under the white terror—Poland, Estonia, Finland and Italy—and for the first time from Asia—China and Mongolia—as well as South America—Brazil, Argentine and Uruguay. Communists (137) formed less than half of the delegates. In addition to the Communist delegates there were 17 young Socialists, 3 members of Christian youth organisations, and the remaining delegates were non-Party. Two young Social-Democrats reported on "The War Danger—the Soviet Union and the youth."

FIRST INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONAL CONFERENCE

The First International Organisation Conference in Berlin, in January 1928, dealt in detail with the reports on

the organisational situation of the different Leagues and issued the following general directions to the Leagues as a whole: overcoming the mistakes and defects of the work in the factory groups and utilisation of their positive experiences; effective application of the line based on the young workers in the most important factory groups; the greatest possible activisation in all fields of work. Organisational conferences were stated to be the most important method of enlivening organisational work, doing away with defects, utilisation of valuable experience and following the line of becoming organisationally rooted in the big factories.

The Plenum of the E.C., Y.C.I., in February, 1928 (Moscow), fully approved of the policy of the L.Y.C.L.S.U. in its struggle against the opposition, and supported the resolutions of the Fifteenth Party Congress of the C.P.S.U. and the E.C.C.I. Plenum on this question.

LACK OF PROPORTION BETWEEN POLITICAL AND ORGANISATIONAL INFLUENCE

The Plenum considered that the most outstanding feature of the present situation in the Communist youth movement is the lack of proportion of the growing political influence of the Y.C.L. over the working youth and the organisational strength of the Y.C.I. sections. A steady growth of the membership is observed by the Plenum in only two Leagues—the Swedish and the Greek Leagues.

CRISIS OF THE Y.C.I.

The Plenum emphasised the chronic crisis of the Y.C.I., the sharp falling off of its membership. Furthermore, it formulated the tasks of the Y.C.L.'s with regard to the opposition in the Socialist youth organisations and in connection with the struggle against the so-called Lefts. A great campaign must be carried on in the mass organisations of the working youth against the attempts of the Y.S.I. to bring them under its influence.

YOUTH COMMISSIONS AND SECTIONS IN THE TRADE UNIONS

As for trade union work, the Plenum proposed that there should be trade union officials from the youth in order to link up trade union work closely with the factory youth. The young trade union officials must hold special conferences in the various trade unions.

To describe youth commissions and youth committees as revolutionary forms of trade union youth work in themselves and to consider youth sections as necessarily reactionary forms of this work is incorrect. There is no fundamental difference between a youth section which works on a revolutionary basis and a revolutionary youth commission which is developed into a mass body. The proposals for establishing special youth trade unions were rejected.

THE Y.C.I. IN THE INNER-PARTY STRUGGLE

In the four years since the Fourth Congress there have been a number of problems and questions of dispute in the various Parties of the Communist International. With regard to these questions the Y.C.I., with the help and support of the Executive, almost always supported with all its forces the correct standpoint, the standpoint of the Comintern. This could be seen in Germany with the appearance of the open letter of the Comintern against the Ruth Fisher line, in France in a struggle against the Right liquidators and the ultra-Left renegades, in Czechoslovakia during the so-called Bubnik crisis, and in all other countries. The Chinese Y.C.L. immediately adopted the resolutions of the Seventh Plenum of the Y.C.I. and with all its energy carried on a struggle to apply them to the Chinese Communist movement. As a whole, this period shows a strengthening of the political activity of the Young Communist Leagues.

VIII. TRANSITION TO MASS WORK

The Fifth World Congress of the Y.C.I. (from August 20 to Sept. 18, 1928)

The Fifth Congress was attended by 140 delegates with a decisive, and 121 delegates with a consultative vote. The Fifth World Congress of the Y.C.I., which followed the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, gave a thorough summing up of the work of the Y.C.I. between 1924 and 1928, and laid down further tasks in all spheres of work on the basis of former experiences.

THE ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTH OF THE Y.C.I. IN 1928

At the time of the Congress the Y.C.I. had 43 Sections with 2,157,232 members. It has organisations in all parts

of the world, and is therefore a real world-embracing organisation, the leader of millions of young workers and peasants in the struggle against capitalist oppression and exploitation. Characteristic of the position and work of the Y.C.I. is the fact that nearly half its Sections are illegal Leagues. In 17 countries the Y.C.L.'s work illegally under very difficult conditions.

Apart from these Sections, there is a whole series of legal political organisations of the illegal and sympathising Leagues. These organisations have 67,068 members.

The L.Y.C.L.S.U. does enormous work in the building of Socialism, for the permanent improvement of the position of the young workers and peasants and their active participation in economic-cultural construction. A considerable majority of the Russian working youth is organised in the Y.C.L., which has now 2,030,000 members.

THE POSITION OF THE WORKING YOUTH

The relative stabilisation of capitalism, increased political oppression and worse economic conditions for the working youth through capitalist rationalisation, were accompanied by new and very difficult conditions for the work of the European Y.C.L.'s. Their main task became: struggle for the political and economic every-day demands of the working youth, capture of the non-Party and Social-Democratic young workers for the united front in the struggle against the effects of capitalist rationalisation, new forms of mass work and mass mobilisation were successfully applied by the Y.C.L.'s.

THE CROWNING RÔLE OF THE YOUTH

The Congress met at a time when youth questions had become an important problem. Characteristic of the situation was the growing rôle of the youth in the process of production and in the class struggle, as well as the exceedingly bitter struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat for the capture of the youth. The increased war preparations of the bourgeoisie compel it to pay special attention to the youth as the decisive factor in the coming imperialist war.

THE RADICALISATION OF THE WORKING YOUTH

As the economic position of the working youth grew worse, its activity increased, its revolutionary spirit was given an impetus, so that now it is playing an increasingly important rôle in the various struggles. The bourgeoisie is

trying to counteract the growth of this revolutionary spirit among the youth, firstly by increased pressure on the revolutionary proletarian youth movement, secondly by a stronger ideological offensive against the youth, thirdly by measures for the militarisation and fascisation of the youth. For this purpose a wide network of bourgeois youth organisations of various kinds (from Fascist to Social-pacifist) is being constructed, in order to put the youth under the influence of bourgeois ideology. In this campaign of the bourgeoisie against the youth, the Y.S.I. is playing an important auxiliary rôle.

THE POLITICAL LINE OF THE CONGRESS

The Y.C.I. Congress made the estimation of the political situation by the Comintern Congress its own; it carried through its work on the line laid down by the Sixth Congress of the Comintern and made the same main tasks—struggle against the imperialist war danger, for the defence of the Soviet Union—the basis of its entire work. Just as the Comintern Congress, the Y.C.I. Congress declared that the Y.C.L.'s, too, must carry on a more energetic struggle against Social-Democracy and that, through capitalist stabilisation and the reformist split offensive, the danger of Right deviations is the main danger also in the Young Communist Leagues, and that an energetic struggle must be carried on against the Right danger.

THE COMING CONGRESS ON THE YOUTH QUESTION

The Sixth World Congress of the Comintern instructed the Y.C.I. to elaborate the question of the tactic and methods of work of the Y.C.I. from the viewpoint of the necessity of a wider capture of the working youth, more varied methods of recruiting and a more vivid and active reaction to the economic, general cultural and theoretical needs of the working youth, while preserving at the same time the character of the Young Communist Leagues as political fighting organisations. Simultaneously, the Comintern Congress instructed the Y.C.I. to adopt more youth-like methods in its work and to struggle against the idea of a second "junior Party."

UNSATISFACTORY DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOVEMENT

The Y.C.I. Congress had to record that the general development of the movement is unsatisfactory. The necessary change—real transition to mass work—has not yet taken

place, and not a single League (except the L.Y.C.L.S.U.) has become a genuine mass organisation. Hardly anywhere has the membership increased in recent years. Reorganisation on a factory group basis has not been brought to a conclusion anywhere. The Y.C.L.'s penetrate into big factories very slowly indeed. The size of the Y.C.L. press is insignificant. Hardly anywhere has work been done among young agricultural labourers. The fluctuation of the membership is considerable and sometimes reaches 70 to 80 per cent.

The reasons of these defects are not to be sought in the general situation which is, without doubt, favourable to the development of the movement. These reasons must be sought in the work of the Leagues themselves.

FUNDAMENTAL DEFECTS

The Congress declared the fundamental defects to be:

(a) The frequent substitution of mass work by talk about mass work, inadequate political activity of the Leagues, especially with regard to thorough defence of the interests of the working youth ("youth policy"); inadequate activity and initiative of the rank and file which are still limited to a considerable extent to their own organisation.

(b) Inadequate "youth-like" methods of work in the Leagues, imitation of the Party; superficiality, agitational phraseology, hectoring methods and even a certain amount of bureaucracy which is frequently noticeable in the system of work of the Leagues; relics of Social-Democratic habits of work; inadequate work with the functionary cadres.

(c) Lack of concentration in the work of enterprise and mass organisations; especially inadmissible inadequacy of work in trade unions and sport organisations.

(d) Non-application of the system of auxiliary organisations.

Therefore, the main point with regard to work was the question of mass work, critical investigation of the former work and methods of work from the standpoint of capturing the mass of the working youth, and developing the Y.C.L.'s into mass organisations, transition to mass work by all Y.C.I. sections.

THOROUGH RE-ORIENTATION TOWARDS MASS WORK

A fundamental premise for this change is thorough re-orientation of all members of the Y.C.I. towards the real work

among the masses. We must overcome, decisively and completely, the isolation of our membership which still prefers to spend its time in its own circles instead of carrying on the difficult and frequently dangerous but necessary work among the masses. Every member of the organisation must be made active and sent to work in a factory, a workshop or trade union, in sport organisations and in the army and navy.

This work must be systematically conducted, the methods continually improved and the experiences made the property of all. Moreover, all active comrades must be given every assistance. Not through orders and circulars, but by actual and concrete example must functionaries encourage self-activity, initiative and energy among the rank and file, directing this energy into the most important channels and towards the most decisive points.

Only by such means will it be possible to effect a real change in the Leagues, only on this condition will the Y.C.I.'s become a source of energy for the revolutionary struggle of the working youth and an organisation which co-ordinates all the elements over whom it exercises influence. This is the line advocated in general already in the decisions of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern. It is in this spirit that the tasks must be set for the Y.C.I. as a whole, and for its individual Sections in the immediate future.

Thus the Fifth Congress thinks that with regard to the change, the main point is to overcome seclusion in our ranks, thoroughly to change the orientation of all members and to make every individual member more active.

STRUGGLE AGAINST THE IMPERIALIST WAR DANGER THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK

The centre of the whole work of the Y.C.I., as a political fighting organisation of the youth, must be the struggle under the general slogans of the Comintern, as well as active participation in all Comintern campaigns and actions. But the most important political task of the movement, to which all others must be subordinated, is the struggle against the war danger, for the defence of the Soviet Union and the oppressed colonial slaves. Therefore, anti-militarist work must receive special attention in all Young Communist Leagues. The war danger is the main question at present, and it must govern the whole activity of the Y.C.I.

At the same time the Y.C.L.'s are confronted with the task of rousing the mass of the working youth for the struggle

against capitalist rationalisation and to develop and lead the struggles of the working youth in every possible way.

MORE ENERGETIC STRUGGLE AGAINST OUR OPPONENTS

These two important political tasks of the Y.C.I. demand more energetic struggle against bourgeois and Social-Democratic youth organisations, as well as wide application of the united front tactic from below.

THE QUESTION OF AUXILIARY ORGANISATIONS

The Congress advocated wide application of the "transmission belt" (trade union youth sections, Young Red Front, cultural and educational societies, economic organisations of the working youth and the like, under the influence of the Y.C.L.). With the help of these "transmission belts," Y.C.L.s must recruit new members. Thereby, the Congress corrected the decision of the Second Congress, which had rejected such auxiliary organisations.

THE WORK IN COLONIAL COUNTRIES

The Congress designated as one of the most important tasks of the movement the establishment of Y.C.L.s in all colonial countries, first and foremost in India. Only in isolated cases, chiefly in backward colonies, can wide national-revolutionary youth organisations be established, provided the leading rôle devolves on the Y.C.L.

The Congress referred to the prominent political meaning of the work of the Y.C.I. in the colonies and declared that the Y.C.L. of China must continue to receive full support from the Y.C.I. Furthermore, work among negroes must be organised on a large scale. The Congress, to a great extent, made the Y.C.L.s of the imperialist countries responsible for the work of the Y.C.L.s in the colonies of these countries.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE RIGHT DANGER

The Congress also pointed out that the ever-growing struggle against Social-Democracy is leading to a series of deviations from the Leninist line in the Communist movement, and that these deviations are mostly of a Right character. The Congress urged all Leagues to carry on an energetic struggle against the Right danger which is at present the main danger to the Comintern. But the Y.C.I. must carry

out the struggle also in its own ranks, because also there the ground exists for the Right danger. In the Y.C.L.s this danger mostly takes the form of under-estimation of the war danger, neglect of international obligations and also of proposals of depoliticisation of the youth movement, of making cultural and educational work the chief activity of the Leagues.

THE PROGRAMME OF THE Y.C.I.

Just as the adoption of the programme of the Comintern, the adoption of the programme of the Y.C.I. is a landmark in the history of the revolutionary labour youth movement. It was the main task of the programme to give a full and fundamental picture of the rôle, the tasks and the struggle of the Y.C.L.s in the epoch of world revolution. The programme of the Y.C.I. is the programme of the tasks of the working youth in the struggle for the world dictatorship of the proletariat. The Young Communist International is a Section of the Comintern and this means that the programme of the C.I. applies to it as well, that that programme is also its programme. Therefore, from a general viewpoint, the programme is a document which defines the special tasks of the working youth and of the Young Communist League in the struggle for Communism. But the programme of the Y.C.I. is not only a summary of the programme of the Communist International. From the standpoint that we are an international organisation and that the young person who reads our programme is not always acquainted with the programme of the C.I., the range of questions and of work dealt with in our programme is the whole world. Thus, the programme shows concrete understanding for the numerous variety of situations in the different parts of the world.

ADMISSION OF NEW SECTIONS

At the Fifth World Congress the admission of the following new sections was confirmed: Australia, Persia, Palestine, Korea, and Syria.

STRENGTHENING THE E.C., Y.C.I.

Also at this Congress the growing tasks made it necessary to increase the number of E.C. members. Fifty-five members and thirty-two candidates were elected at the Congress.